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A LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HON. SIR GEORGE GREY, BART. M.P.,

ON SOME OF THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF

THE MEDICAL PROFESSION,

BY

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TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR GEORGE GREY, BART., M.P.

Sir,

If a sincere desire to promote the settlement of the important question of Medical Reform can be admitted in extenuation of a frank expression of opinion on some of the chief points involved in the discussion of that comprehensive subject, I may, perhaps, be pardoned for thus trespassing on your attention. The freedom enjoyed by the inhabitants of this country in being permitted to give publicity to their thoughts on any question affecting their general or individual interests, is possibly, also, not wholly unproductive of advantage to the Statesmen by whom our laws are prepared; since the professional experience and unofficial statements of private persons may in certain cases supply information on matters of detail, which might otherwise escape the notice of those charged with the promotion of the general welfare of the community. This feeling has, I confess, encouraged me to entertain a hope that the views of even a remote Practitioner of Medicine, unconnected officially with any of the corporate bodies now competing for the future government of the Profession, may receive the momentary consideration of a Minister deservedly esteemed for his liberality and justice. And, that those opinions have not been formed without some opportunities of learning the prevailing sentiments of my Professional brethren, in different parts of the country, may be inferred from the fact of the interval between the time of my entrance into the Profession, as pupil to

an eminent provincial Surgeon in extensive general practice, and the date of my settlement in this Town as Physician, having included three years residence in London as Surgeon, and a connection, both as Student and Lecturer, with a metropolitan Medical School, followed shortly afterwards by the completion of a similar tie with a provincial School of Medicine.

Having thus discharged a customary, but unpleasant, duty in prefacing the few following remarks by a brief reference to personal motives and qualifications, I shall, in the first instance, with your permission, glance rapidly and concisely at the history and present condition of the Medical Profession of this Kingdom, and then proceed to consider, in an impartial spirit, those mutual claims existing between it and the public, which, being based upon truth and justice, necessarily possess an identity of origin and objects.

The establishment in England of a body of properly educated men as Medical Practitioners, dates from the period of the Reformation. In the Middle Ages the practice of Medicine, in its higher branches, was in the hands of the Monks, who, being restricted by their vows from personally shedding human blood, delegated to the Barber-Surgeons the performance of the few simple operations then in use. But as the suppression of the monasteries by King Henry the Eighth deprived the people of such Medical assistance as they had previously received from this source, we find the same monarch granting a charter to the Barber-Surgeons' Company of London, and thus advancing their social position, while he, at the same time, founded the London College of Physicians, and placed it under the guidance of Linacre and other eminent laymen. The secularization of the practice of Medicine, thus legally recognized, was soon followed by similar advantages to those which resulted to our national jurisprudence, from throwing open to laymen the highest offices of the law. Within a hundred years from the establishment of the College of Physicians, William Harvey, one of its members, gained for himself and country an undying reputation by the discovery of the Circulation of the Blood, an illustrious example which has been unceasingly and not unsuccessfully followed by his successors.

The present high reputation of the London College of Surgeons was not indeed so rapidly attained; its members having been for a long time hampered and depressed by their hereditary connection with the Chirurgical dependents of the Monkish Physicians. But since the time of Cheselden and Hunter, no one has ventured to dispute the claims of the representatives of British Surgery to an equal participation in the honours and privileges, professional and public, accessible to the most eminent Medical men of this country. It only remains to say a few words on the origin of the Apothecaries' Company, and the relations existing between it and a large proportion of English Surgeons. This Company, one of the chartered Guilds of the City of London, was, in the first instance, founded for the benefit of the preparers and retailers of the loathsome substances which formed the principal ingredients in the prescriptions of the Middle Ages. Under a wise system of management, it had, however, so far adapted its operations to the progress of Pharmaceutical Science as to have obtained, at the commencement of this Century, a well-merited character for carefulness in the selection and preparation of the more simple and elegant articles of the modern *Materia Medica;* and might, on that ground, have preferred a just claim to be entrusted with the regulation of the sale and manufacture of drugs in this Kingdom. But this latter duty, so necessary in a Country where poisonous substances are daily retailed by ignorant and improper persons, and where the adulteration of expensive Medicines is carried to a great extent, has, strange to say, never yet been enforced by any legal provision; while, by a most extraordinary and offensive exercise of Legislative power, the respectable Company of Apothecaries, the position and acquirements of whose members doubtless qualified them admirably for the superintendence of the important trade of which they were the recognized head, was in 1815 constituted an examining and governing board, to which the great majority of English Surgeons have since been bound to submit. For this insult the Medical Profession was indebted to the narrow-minded selfishness of the then dominant cliques of the London Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons; who, from a desire to enhance their own importance, and detain the great majority of Medical Practitioners in a per-

manently subordinate position, very suicidally, as regards the common interests of the Medical body, refused to superintend the examination and education of the English general Practitioners. And now that the license of the Apothecaries' Company is required for many public appointments, and is the only certificate or diploma which provides a legal power for recovering debts due for Medical attendance, its possession is rendered compulsory on so many persons as to preserve a connection between that Company and a large portion of the most respectable provincial Surgeons. But this connection has ever been a forced and unnatual one. Its inevitable tendency has been to degrade the Medical Profession as a body, through a vain attempt to re-establish the order of things which existed two or three centuries ago. And though this unjust and selfish effort of the former heads of the profession to elevate themselves by depressing their brethren has been happily frustrated by the increased intelligence of the age, and by the late rapid diffusion of Professional knowledge among every section of the Medical community, I feel the utmost confidence in asserting that an immense majority of the Profession would hail with intense satisfaction the final dissolution of all educational and governmental connection between any portion of the Medical Practitioners of England, and a trading Guild, occupying the anomalous position now held by the Apothecaries' Company of London.

Beyond the steps recorded in this necessarily brief and imperfect review of the history of the Medical Profession in this country, by which it will have been seen that in London alone was there any legal provision for the constitution and government of its different branches, no efforts were made to remedy the evils notoriously existing throughout England, until the Apothecaries' Act of 1815 gave to that Company the power of granting a license which conferred on its possessor certain rights and privileges throughout the whole kingdom. To this may now be added the recent Charter of the London College of Surgeons, by which that Corporation was constituted the College of Surgeons of England, and its provincial members were, for the first time, admitted, though in a very slight and inadequate degree, to a share in its government.

The present condition of the Medical Profession exhibits the melancholy results which might have been anticipated from the long-continued neglect of its interests and public relations by the legislature. It is impossible on an occasion like the present to recount all the grievances and injuries which now afflict the Profession, derived partly from the foolish dissensions of many, and the discreditable conduct of a few, of its own members, and in part also, but in a still greater degree, from the knavery, ignorance, and fanaticism which assail it from without. The numerous channels through which entrance can be obtained into the Medical Profession, and the wide diversities existing in the duration and nature of the probationary studies required, in the severity and mode of conducting the examinations, and in the relative status of the various bodies conferring Medical diplomas, have more than any other causes, tended to excite jealousies and annoyances in the minds of the legitimate Practitioners of Medicine. As illustrative of the lamentable effects of the dissensions thus induced, may be mentioned that deterioration of professional tone and feeling which the frequent discussion of trivial grounds of difference is so apt to engender, the absence of a sufficient amount of proper *esprit de corps* to ensure unity of sentiment and purpose, and the consequent erection of unnecessary and unnatural obstacles to that general and social elevation of the Medical community which would soon follow a state of unanimity and concord among its members. Then, in addition to the injuries which the profession suffers from the causes just referred to, it is preyed upon, and its members—men who by painful studies and large expenditure of time and money, have qualified themselves to minister to human suffering—are openly robbed by a host of uneducated pretenders, who annually draw from a defrauded public large sums of money. And, as if to add to the grossness of the injustice in this particular case, the Profession thus cheated of a portion of its income, is at the same time disgraced in the public sight by the very same persons, who, being tacitly permitted by the law to assume any professional title they think proper, daily heap ill-merited odium on our calling by their dishonourable, offensive, and fraudulent conduct. Under such circumstances, while many

of the most active of our body are engaged in profitless contentions, and the majority are disgusted with, but at the same time hopeless of redressing, these evils, it cannot be a matter of surprise that Medical Science and the study of disease, in its higher and most important branches, should languish; or that in consequence of this inaction a variety of spurious imitations of the Medical Science of nature, and innumerable crazy theories of life and disease should unceasingly be pressed upon public attention, and supported in some instances by men whose education ought at least to have enabled them to discriminate between a natural truth and falsehood. It may further be observed, that the general Public, for whose benefit the Medical Profession may be presumed to have been constituted, and whose interests are professedly the chief and sole objects of legislative solicitude, has also suffered and still continues to suffer to a very great extent, both directly from the same evils which affect our Profession; and also indirectly from the disorganization and depression of the Medical body. And in neglecting to give due prominence to the claims of the general Public, the party most deeply interested in the speedy settlement of the great question of Medical Reform, the leaders of the various movements in furtherance of that object, have, I think, thrown away a most powerful auxiliary, if not the most essential element of success.

I am, therefore, in pursuance of the present inquiry, led to examine the claims which the public may justly prefer in reference to the Medical profession, and the extent to which those claims have already been recognized by the government, while I shall also endeavour to determine the legislative provisions by which they may be most simply and effectually enforced.

In the first place, the Public has a right to expect that every man assuming a title implying, on the part of the holder, the possession of the special knowledge required for the successful treatment of disease, is in reality the skilful and instructed person he represents himself to be. But at present so heedless is the law of this moderate demand of right and reason, that any broken down swindler or itinerant vagabond who chooses to call himself "Dr. A.," or "Mr. B., Surgeon," is notoriously at perfect liberty to

parade these titles in his indecent advertisements, and practice, with impunity, by means of the Professional status thus impudently assumed, acts of extortionate rapacity, which if generally known would create an universal feeling of disgust and indignation. The fear of exposure however, too often prevents the victims from appealing to the law for protection; and, having once wormed himself into the confidence of his unfortunate dupes, the impostor feels emboldened to pursue with impunity his unprincipled career. Other offences against the criminal law, of a still deeper dye, which a more vigilant system of police, and a closer attention to the registration of the causes of death could not fail to bring to light, are, moreover, there is every reason to believe, not unfrequently perpetrated by the same disreputable class of persons. And here, Sir, I cannot but pause for a moment to direct your attention to the great discredit cast upon our national Legislation and the Executive Government of this country by their toleration and passive encouragement of the miscreants, who thus prey upon society. Can it be otherwise, so long as the law of England allows the ignorant persons, who form the mass of the people to be defrauded, always under circumstances of peculiar hardship, and frequently injured to the permanent loss of health, or even to the destruction of life itself? or so long as the Government, by its stamps on Patent Medicines, shares in their profits, and thereby exhibits an apparent sympathy, and identity of interests with the aforesaid swindlers; thus indirectly assisting to mulct and insult the Medical Profession, by affecting to consider those persons, and the nostrums in which they deal, as worthy of the special patronage of the constituted Authorities of the Kingdom? Moreover, the Government, by neglecting to exercise an efficient supervision of the constitution of the Medical Profession, and thus allowing ignorant impostors to be confounded by the Public with men properly educated and legally qualified to practise Medicine, not only assists in injuring and degrading the latter, but also jeopardizes, to a much greater extent than would at first sight appear, the civil rights and property of individual members of the general community. Thus, under the existing law, on the production of the certificates of two legally qualified Medical Practitioners, and at the request of a

relative or friend, any person may be arrested as insane, and confined in a lunatic asylum. But will it be credited, that beyond the mere declaration of the Medical Practitioner signing the certificate, the law requires no further proof of his Professional or moral fitness for discharging so important a duty?* He may falsely and fraudulently have assumed a Medical title which he never legally possessed; he may have obtained possession of the diploma of a deceased Practitioner, and represented it as a proof of his own qualification; or, in the event of his possessing a proper diploma, he may be a man of utterly debased moral feeling, an outcast from the society of his Professional brethren; or again, a man intellectually unfitted for the determination of the mental state of an alleged lunatic. But at present what security is there for the Public against these possible sources of injustice and fraud? The same evils, it is also evident, may, and undoubtedly do, in some measure invalidate the Medical opinions by which the vast operations of Life Insurance Companies are chiefly guided. For in the existing state of the profession they can have no perfect guarantee of the Medical or moral qualification of the Practitioners, to whom they are compelled to refer for information as to the past and present state of health and general eligibility of a person whose life may be proposed for insurance. And a similar feeling of insecurity must, from the same cause, be experienced in all business transactions which require or rest upon Medical certificates. The remedy for this evil will hereafter be briefly noticed.

Secondly, the public may not unreasonably expect that men bearing the same professional titles, and practising in the same country, shall have pursued the same course of studies, and been subjected to the same examinations. I have already intimated that this is not the case, and that the inequalities existing in these respects constitute a most prolific source of the dissensions which harass the profession. Its appropriate remedy may also be most conveniently considered in another part of this letter, as may those for the two evils next noticed.

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* Vide a short Paper on the Amendment of the Law of Lunacy, published in the *London Medical Gazette*, 1849.

Thirdly, the public has a right to be satisfied that Medical men who have disgraced themselves or their calling, by criminal or dishonourable conduct, shall no longer he allowed to remain in the Profession. Whereas no such provision is at present operative on the bulk of the Medical Profcssion in England, the list of members of some of the colleges containing the names of men long since deceased (many of whose diplomas are, there is reason to believe, in the hands of uneducated persons, and used by them for fraudulent purposes), together with those of a few individuals, whose expulsion from the profession would add much to its respectability.

Lastly, it would, perhaps, not be too much for the Public to assume that systematic efforts were made by the profession, collectively, to advance the knowledge of disease, and that those efforts were encouraged and aided by the Legislature and the Government. But here, too, notwithstanding the industry shown by individual cultivators of Medical Science, by a few voluntary Associations and Medical Societies, and the inducements offered by one or two Medical Colleges for the advancement of special departments of Medicine, I am constrained to state, that no general or systematic attempt has yet been made to concentrate on one point, or collect in one channel, the zeal, intelligence, and experience of the numerous body of men engaged in Medical practice throughout the extensive dependencies of the British empire; that the growth of rational Medicine has thus been greatly retarded, and false and absurd systems allowed to flourish in its place; that while the interests of Science in general have suffered from this indifference and apathy, Medical Science, in its strictest definition—the knowledge of disease, its causes, prevention, and cure—has in particular been lost sight of; and that simultancously with, and, doubtless, as a consequence of, this neglect of their own propcr Science by Medical mcn, it has lost that hold which it once possessed on thc attention and rcspcct of the Govcrnment, and now languishcs, to the great discredit of our country, and the serious detriment of mankind.

If, Sir, I am correct in supposing thcse to be the expectations relative to thc Mcdical Profession, cntertained by the most intelli-

gent portion of the non-medical community, then, in venturing respectfully to submit some propositions designed to give practical effect to the views just stated, I shall not, I trust, be considered as advancing any undue pretensions on behalf of my Professional brethren. The general interests of that Profession are, it cannot too often be repeated, those of the Public, individually and collectively; there is not one object sought for by the former which does not, or at least should not, find an echo in the heart, and an advocate in the reason, of every intelligent man among the latter. To relieve suffering, to lengthen life, to add to its virtuous, and repress its vicious, enjoyments; to protect, comfort, and elevate the poor; to multiply the ties existing between the different classes of society, and thus add to the security of the State; to aid the cause of Science, and at the same time facilitate the progress of Religion; these, and many other laudable ends, are all directly or indirectly promoted by the patient zeal and self-denying perseverance of the Medical Profession. To some the pursuit of such objects may appear almost Quixotic; and for a Profession, many of whose members are themselves painfully conscious of the privations and annoyances of poverty, to preserve in this wealth-worshipping age, an undivided allegiance, not merely to the strict demands of duty, but also to the promptings of an almost chivalrous generosity, and to be deaf to the voice of interest, when the spirit of honour, or even the established usages of etiquette, dictate a contrary course, may perhaps seem to justify the contemptuous compassion, if not the avowed contumely, of the very numerous class of persons who expect immediate and tangible rewards for the sacrifices and exertions of their lives. But to the leading Statesmen of our country, men called by the national voice to redress the grievances and promote the happiness of the mass of the people, we look with greater confidence for a public recognition of the importance of our calling, and the speedy enactment of a series of legislative provisions for the benefit of all who are interested—and who is not?—in the preservation of the honour, skill, and devotion of a Profession, second but to one in the sanctity of its character, and inferior to none in the extent and diversity of the attainments required for its successful pursuit.

Proceeding, then, on the assumption that the claims of the Medical profession should be recognized by the State, so far as they may be found based upon, and consistent with, the beneficial requirements of the general community, I have, lastly, to submit the following propositions as embodying what I believe to be the wishes of the majority of my brother Practitioners, and as tending to accomplish, in the most direct and least offensive manner, the admitted necessities of the case.

Those propositions relate—

1.—To a provisional organization of the Medical Profession.

2.—To its future constitution.

3.—To its internal government.

4.—To its legislative protection.

5.—To the establishment of a civil Medical department for the direct service of the State.

6.—To the national encouragement of Medical Science.

1.—In order to define more clearly the existing body of legally qualified Medical Practitioners, and to enable the Public to discriminate between them and persons fraudulently assuming Medical titles, it might, with perfect justice to all parties, be provided,

1.—That all Persons possessed of legally recognized diplomas or licenses to practice Medicine in any of its branches, be requested to exhibit and register the same, after the following manner, within a given period.

2.—That the Superintendent Registrars of Births, &c., be directed to cause a circular to be sent to every presumed Medical Practitioner resident within their respective districts, informing him of the time and place appointed for such Registration; and that in cases where it is declared impossible for any Medical Practitioner to attend in person for that purpose, he shall nevertheless forward his diplomas, together with a written declaration that he is the person described in these documents.

3.—That the date of each diploma thus presented, the title of the body conferring it, and the name and residence of the recipient, be entered by the Superintendent Registrar in

a book provided for the purpose, and a copy forwarded to the Registrar-General of Births, &c.

4.—That from these returns a general register of the names and qualifications of the persons constituting the Medical Profession be prepared under the direction of that Officer, and that the insertion of the name and residence of any Medical Practitioner in that list shall *primâ facie*, and in the absence of positive proof to the contrary, be received as legal evidence of his possession of a due license to practise Medicine in England, and such persons shall alone be considered by the law and government as forming the recognized Medical Profession of this Country.

2.—The future constitution of the profession must necessarily depend on the conditions under which candidates are hereafter admitted into the Medical body. And as the power of determining the nature and extent of those conditions is one which can only be efficiently exercised by a General Board, acting for the whole Kingdom, and in intimate accordance with the Executive Government, I shall briefly enumerate some of the benefits which would result from the creation of such a body, and conclude this section by suggesting a mode of remedying certain admitted defects in the existing provisions for Medical education.

A General Board or Council for the government of the Medical Profession as a whole, constituted after the manner proposed in Sir James Graham's Bill on this subject, *i.e.*, composed of a number of Physicians and Surgeons appointed by their respective Colleges, aided, if required, by eminent persons not members of the profession, and presided over by a responsible Minister of State, would, in the first place, be enabled to form regulations, and prescribe a course of study and a series of examinations through which, as through a common portal, all future candidates for a license to practise Medicine should be compelled to pass.

This provision would thus at once ensure, as far as possible, that general equality of education and examination to which many of the best men in the Profession look hopefully, as calculated to abolish a chief cause of the jealousies and dissensions now unhappily existing among its members.

It would, moreover, enable the Government to continue the publication of a correct list of the legal Practitioners of Medicine, and thus furnish the public with a ready means of protection against the artifices of Medical pretenders. In addition to these advantages, a Board like that proposed would furnish a highly-desirable medium of communication between the Medical Profession and the general community. The grievances and just claims of the former would then find an official exponent, and the skill, zeal, and knowledge of its members might then, also, be more effectually concentrated on efforts for the promotion of the general good.

A body thus representing the interests and the talent, both of the public and the profession, might, lastly, with great propriety, be placed at the head of the Civil Medical Department, the establishment of which forms one of the succeeding recommendations.

Of the evils connected with the existing provisions for Medical education and the appropriate remedies, I shall merely enumerate—

1.—The inattention of some examining bodies to the literary and scientific attainments of the candidates for their diplomas.

2.—The confused mixture of the literary and scientific with the purely Medical or technical portion of the examination for a medical diploma; whereby the attention of the candidate is, in a great measure, occupied by minor and ancillary studies, at a moment when all his mental energies ought to be fixed upon on those important practical subjects, a perfect knowledge of which is so essential to his future success.

3.—The apparent neglect of the higher and more practical departments of Medical Science, by the undue prominence thus given to its secondary and collateral branches.

4.—The recognition of attendance at Provincial Schools and Hospitals, as all sufficient for the general and Professional instruction of the future Practitioners of Medicine.

and suggest—

1.—That all future candidates for admission into the Medical Profession shall undergo three separate examinations; the

first, or matriculation examination, being intended to test the extent of their *literary* attainments; the second, their acquaintance with *general science*; and the third having reference solely to their knowledge of the Sciences directly connected with the various duties of the Medical Practitioner.

2.—That the mode of conducting these examinations, the nature of the subjects comprised in each, and the regulations affecting the age, &c., of candidates, be uniform throughout the Empire, so that the licentiates of the General Board may be received on equal terms throughout the whole of the British dominions.

3.—That in future Medical curricula and examinations, the necessary steps be taken to ensure each candidate's possession of a due knowledge of General Pathology and Hygiene, and of the various public duties which the members of the Profession may be called upon to discharge—subjects of great and increasing importance, but to which the attention of the Medical examining bodies has hitherto been very inadequately directed.

4.—That during his period of Professional study, every candidate for a license to practise Medicine, shall devote at least one year to attendance at a British or Foreign *Metropolitan* Medical School and Hospital.

To this last proposition alone do I anticipate any objection; and having myself been indebted to a Provincial Medical School in the earlier part of my professional education, I am anxious not to appear to detract from the character of those institutions. On the contrary, viewing them as places of instruction, where the student can leisurely master the difficulties encountered at the commencement of an extended range of scientific pursuits, and as being immediately adjacent to the large County Hospitals, where he can undisturbedly examine the treatment generally adopted in cases of accident and disease, I am disposed to regard them as proffering to the Medical student, in the early part of his career, greater advantages than the more imposing Metropolitan Hospitals and Collegiate Schools. Nor can I perceive any just reason why

the Government should have hesitated to confer on the people of this country, at present so anxious for the diffusion of education among all classes, Provincial General and Medical Colleges similar to those which have recently been pressed on the acceptance of Ireland, and which, in a slightly different form, have so long been enjoyed and appreciated by the intelligent people of Scotland. But notwithstanding this prepossession in favour of Provincial Schools during the earlier periods of Medical study, I cannot resist an apprehension that a Medical Education, conducted wholly in a provincial town, will not ensure the expansion of ideas and correctness of judgment in general matters required to gain for a Professional man the respect and confidence of a well-instructed and rapidly-progressive public. And both for the improvement of the faculty of comparison, so important to a Medical man, and in order to weed the mind of injurious prejudices and contracted views, a year's residence in a Metropolis by each student must, I think, prove highly advantageous to all parties, by contributing to the respectability of the profession; while the time thus spent, will, if I mistake not, constitute an epoch in the life of the Medical Practitioner, from which he will, in after years, date the correction of many an error, and the acquisition of many a sound principle.

3.—The proposed arrangements for regulating the future constitution of the Medical Body, while enabling any questions arising between it and the Public to be fully discussed, and equitably adjusted, by a competent Tribunal, would thus continue to indicate the precise boundaries of the Profession, by rendering it co-extensive with the possession of a licence to practise Medicine. And, beyond insisting on the invariable observance of this general provision, the Legislature could not, I conceive, beneficially interfere with the internal or medico-collegiate relations of individual practitioners. The interests of the Public would be amply protected by the general security demanded, and it would evidently be both inconvenient and impolitic for a Minister engaged in legislation on a subject of national importance, to affect to take cognizance of the diversified titles and honorary distinctions held by various members of the Profession. In the

strict eye of the law, all its members would then be equal, as regards the right to practise any branch of the Medical Art for gain, or to assume in this country medical titles. And, in connection with this latter point, it may not here be useless to notice an objection, urged a few years since against one of the clauses of Sir James Graham's Bill, before referred to. By this clause it was proposed to designate as "Licentiates in Medicine and Surgery," the holders of the general license, an innovation and a presumed restriction, which gave rise to much discontent, and probably contributed as much as any other cause to the withdrawal of that measure. Any prohibition of the use of the word "Surgeon" in such cases would, I think, be unreasonable and unjust. For a man declared by a legally appointed and duly qualified board, fit to practise the Medical Art in all its branches, including, of course, Surgery, is to all intents and purposes a Surgeon; and no law should prevent him from assuming that title, if he think proper. Those Gentlemen, therefore, who under the proposed regulations, might feel anxious to render manifest to the Public their additional connection with the Royal College of Surgeons, or to show that they confined their practice to Surgery, could readily accomplish these objects by using the title of Consulting Surgeon, and adding to their names words indicative of the nature of their connection with the National College of Surgery.

I have hitherto contended for the enforcement of one uniform legal qualification for Medical Practice in this kingdom, and have discountenanced the idea of any further compulsory legislative interference with the subsequent collegiate attachments of individual practitioners. But in order to preserve untainted the character of the Profession, and to enable its members to combine for the advancement of Medical Science, the interchange of sentiments and experience, the elevation of the meritorious, and the repression of the base, some machinery for the *internal* government of so numerous a body becomes essential. And this power might, I venture to believe, be most advantageously left in the hands of the existing Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, from a full conviction that the eminent men who now preside over those National Institutions, would fully justify, by their liberality and

zcal for the general honour of the profession, thc reasonable expectations of the Medical and general Public. It is scarcely necessary to urge at length the various considerations which render the maintenance of such citadels within the pale of the Profession, indispensable to the preservation of its dignity. From causes which need not be particularized, it too often happens that Medical men, properly educated, and legally qualified, desert the profession of Scientific Medicine, or that based on the immutable laws of Nature, and become supporters of some of the irrational dogmas concerning disease and remedies, under cover of which, the Public of this country is so extensively defrauded. As, therefore, it is for the Public good that any General Board should have the power of expelling from the Medical Profession, and thus punishing by the loss of social caste, and valuable privileges, men convicted of heinous offences against Society, so is it equally incumbent on the Guardians of the honour of our calling to mark their condemnation of discreditable practices, by declining to associate with the offending parties. Nor could there be any injustice in the expulsion or exclusion of such persons, since the connection of individuals with these Colleges, would, under the proposed regulations, be purely voluntary, and would be sought for only by those members of the Profession, who were desirous of maintaining its general respectability, and extending its reputation.

In mentioning the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons alone, as the future guardians of the character of the Profession, I have intentionally ignored the existence of the Apothecaries' Company, for it is impossible to bclieve that any Government, anxious to promote the social interests, and general welfarc of the Medical Community, will long continue to tolerate the present compulsory degradation of a largc proportion of its members. Any Pharmaceutical knowledge which thc Officials of that Company may be presumed to havc acquircd, must evidcntly bc possessed in a higher dcgree by those members of the College of Physicians, who, in thcir Pharmacopœia, dirccl the mode of preparing the Drugs sold by the formcr. And, as the Chcmists and Druggists of this kingdom, whcnevcr the long cxpected law for

the regulation of that trade shall come into operation, will naturally prefer a connection with the ably conducted London College of Pharmacy, to placing themselves in subjection to a body of trading competitors, nothing would seem to remain to the Apothecaries' Company, in its corporate capacity, but a return to the obscurity from which it was so unwisely dragged by the legislative Enactment of 1815

The establishment of a College of General Practitioners, as proposed by a certain party in the Profession, would, I am satisfied, prove equally objectionable to the great body of provincial surgeons; as it must tend to place them in a permanently subordinate position, and completely debar them from the possibility of ever rising to the higher Professional honours. Nor will any such further addition to the existing Medical Corporations be at all necessary, if the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons meet in a proper spirit the exigencies of the present crisis. In the expectation of obtaining an amended charter by which it would be constituted the College of Physicians of England, the former body has, if I mistake not, already signified a willingness at once to admit to its membership, those graduates of recognised Universities, who may *bonâ fide* practise as Physicians in this country. It has, moreover, for some time adopted a liberal rule, in modifying its examination in favour of Medical Practitioners of a certain age, which might be judiciously extended so as to comprise a greater number of the more experienced members of the Profession. And if the College of Surgeons has not yet conceded all the reasonable demands of its members, the latter may indulge a well-founded hope that under a system of Medical organization like that here proposed, by which the connection of individual Practitioners with this College would for all legal purposes be purely voluntary, the governing Council of the latter could not avoid appealing more directly than heretofore to the sympathies of the majority. To what extent the principle of popular representation should be carried out in the constitution of the governing Councils of such institutions is a difficult question to determine satisfactorily. Two opposite evils are here to be dreaded, viz., the prevalence of an idea that the posts of honour in the profession are to be attained by the

vulgar arts of agitation, and the toleration of the irresponsible despotism of self-elected cliques. Nor can I perceive any escape from the dilemma, but in the partial recognition of the conflicting principles of *election* and *selection*, a certain number of seats in the governing Council being filled by the chosen representatives of the majority, and the remainder selected from the general body by the existing members of the Council.

This question of the constitution of the governing Council of either College belongs to a class of subjects, by the prolonged discussion of which the establishment of the more essential principles of Medical Reform has doubtless been greatly retarded. But as a very warm controversy of this nature prevails at the present moment between the existing Council of the College of Surgeons and the body of its Members, I cannot avoid a brief allusion to the chief points at issue between them.

The gentlemen forming the Council have, it is understood, framed a bye-law declaring any Member of the College engaged in the practice of Midwifery or Pharmacy to be *ipso facto* ineligible to a seat in that Council. And as this regulation is considered virtually to exclude the immense majority of the Profession from the possibility of ever obtaining Collegiate distinction, many of the latter have very naturally resented the slight thus supposed to be cast upon them. For my own part, with every desire to perceive in the proceedings of the Council merely a proper regard for the dignity of the College, I cannot but arrive at a conclusion favourable to the relaxation and partial abolition of the obnoxious rule. The College of Physicians has long been proud to admit among the number of its Fellows, and thus to render eligible to its highest offices, eminent Physicians engaged in obstetric practice. It is therefore difficult to understand how the dignity of the Sister College could be compromised by a similar concession. And the continuance of any such restriction becomes the less justifiable in the latter case, if it be remembered that the performance of the various operations of the obstetric art clearly belongs to the domain of Surgery, in the strictest and most literal acceptation of that term. In excluding from the highest honours of the College those among its members who practise Pharmacy, the Council has

not I think sufficiently discriminated between the great mass of country Surgeons who merely supply their own patients with the requisite Medicines, charging also, and chiefly, for professional attendance, and the comparatively small number of Practitioners to be found in London and a few large towns, whose remuneration is derived solely from the sale of Medicines, and who are thus *pro tanto* in a social position inferior to that of the humblest village surgeon, though deriving ten times the amount of income from this commercial source. The one insensibly merges in the druggist; whereas the other in comprising in his general charge the value of the Medicines used in the treatment of the case, is simply acting on the same principle which might lead a London Surgeon to consult his patients' convenienoe by obtaining for them certain necessary instruments and dressings. Hence, while recognizing the propriety of excluding from seats in the Council of the College of Surgeons, men practising wholly as Apothecaries, *i. e., deriving their remuneration solely from a charge for the drugs supplied,* it does certainly appear to me, in the highest degree, unjust to apply the same rule to the great body of provincial Surgeons, some of whom enjoy a reputation for surgical skill not inferior to that of the officers of the Metropolitan Hospitals.

I have hitherto abstained from noticing the extreme opinions on the subject of Medical Reform, entertained by a few of its more ardent advocates. Under the plea of ensuring unity, these gentlemen propose to abolish the existing powers of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, in order to reduce the members of the Profession to one dead level. I have previously advocated the equality of all properly licensed Medical Practitioners in the sight of the law; but this will probably fail to satisfy the dissentients alluded to. It certainly seems strange that opinions, which, when professed by the poor and ignorant, are not more zealously condemned than keenly ridiculed, should be supported by even an insignificant section of a body of educated and experienced men. To suppose that professional equality can be enforced by Act of Parliament, is to betray a forgetfulness of human nature, as complete as that manifested by the misguided men, who would attempt to obtain, by similar

means, moral, social, intellectual, or physical equality. Let all men entering the Profession start on equal terms, as far as length of study and severity of examination can be secured by legislative enactments. But, thenceforth, the great distinctive features of disposition and mental power, which constitute the peculiarities of individual character, will not fail to make themselves felt, with or without the permission of the law, so as to assign very different places to the various competitors in the race for professional fame, wealth, and honours. In reference to the internal government of the Medical Profession, I have therefore simply to submit, That the existing Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons properly governed, and aided in their reforming efforts by the timely extension of their respective Charters, are sufficient to ensure the maintenance of the honour, dignity, and general character of the Medical Profession, and to enable the well disposed among its members, to associate for the common good; and that any official connection between the general body of the Profession, and any subordinate institutions would be both unneccessary, and detrimental to the best interests of the former.

4.—In presenting the few following observations on the necessity and justice of some legal protection being extended to the members of the Medical Profession, I beg to disclaim on behalf of the latter any desire to interfere with what has been somewhat absurdly termed, the Medical Liberty of the subject. We are well aware, that, from the very nature of man, there must at all times necessarily be more or less Medical Quackery, as in every Free State, there will always be a certain amount of political and religious empiricism. And as Society good-naturedly tolerates the latter nuisances, so will it in general refuse to suppress by any arbitrary process, the empty dogmas and senseless "systems" in which *dilettanti* Medical Philosophers may choose to indulge. The sole exception to this wise rule should arise from those cases in which, under the cloak of Medical Dissent, ignorant and unprincipled men inflict serious, and often irreparable injury, on a helpless portion of the Community. In granting a limited protection to the Medical Profession, the Public would, therefore, so far be protecting itself from evil. And as the

propriety of conferring certain privileges on men who must have made many personal sacrifices in order to obtain the special knowledge requisite for the successful practice of their Art, is moreover, fully admitted by the most eminent writers on Political Economy, it may not be considered unreasonable for the Profession to expect.—

1.—That any person practising Medicine for gain, and habitually using a Title, which may lead the Public to suppose that he is a recognized Medical Licentiate, but whose name cannot be found in the Official List of Licensed Medical Practitioners, shall be cautioned by a Public Officer to abstain from the future use of such Title.

2.—That if this admonition be disregarded, and the same person be proved to have subsequently practised for gain any department of the Medical Art, he shall be liable to a fine for each offence, to be summarily recovered in the County Court of the district; and if persisting in the same offence after two such convictions, he shall be rendered amenable to the criminal law, and be proceeded against and punished in the same manner, as other persons convicted of obtaining money under false pretences.

Moreover, in order to remove a prevalent impression, that a charge for Drugs used in the treatment of disease constitutes the only mode by which a Medical Practitioner can legally enforce payment for the mental consideration and personal trouble bestowed on his patient, it also becomes highly desirable, and appears but just,

3.—That the Legislature should formally recognise the pecuniary value of Medical skill and attention, by authorizing the recovery by legal process of all just demands for the latter description of services.

5.—Before venturing to propose the consolidation into one administrative body of the Medical departments of certain branches of the public service, I may be permitted to observe that the public duties discharged by members of the Medical Profession are already of a very important nature, of considerable extent, and annually increasing in both respects; and that the existing organiza-

tion or machinery for performing and superintending the execution of those duties is incomplete and partial, unnecessarily expensive as regards its central portion, and inefficient for the due accomplishment of the important objects entrusted to it.

In confirmation of this latter statement, I shall merely enumerate—

The general dissatisfaction with the present arrangements for the Medical relief of the poor, as expressed both by the Convention of Poor-Law Medical Officers, presided over by my universally esteemed friend, Dr. Hodgkin, and also by the public Press of this country.

The equally objectionable, though less obvious defects in the administrative machinery of the Law of Lunacy, whereby an unnecessary number of paid Medical Officers are retained in London, while adequate security is not provided for the effective superintendence of the extensive Country districts, where abuses may be presumed to be more likely to occur.

The crippled and ineffective condition of the Medical department of the General Board of Health, by which it has been rendered impossible fully to carry out the objects of the promoters of the Public Health movement, thus depriving the public of the benefits naturally expected from that measure, and at the same time casting an ill-merited slight on the Profession, to whose exertions that movement was chiefly indebted for its present partial success.

In furtherance, then, of two of the recognized principles of all sound Reform, increased efficiency and diminished expenditure, I respectfully submit—

1.—That both these objects might be obtained by the fusion of the Medical Departments of the Lunacy Commission, of the General Board of Health, and of the Medical Relief Department of the Poor-Law Board into a single Board, to be placed at the head of a Civil Medical Service, established throughout the Country, for the discharge of the existing, and other analagous public Medical duties.

2.—That the members of the proposed Board form part of the General Council, entrusted with the regulation and government of the whole Medical Profession.

6.—The discouragement practically offered to the original study of disease in this country is best illustrated by comparing the benefits enjoyed by the successful investigators of other branches of Science, with those accessible to the discoverers of important principles in the Science and practice of Medicine. In mechanical science or in manufactures, a new and useful invention directly benefits the discoverer, by the legal protection which secures to him a monopoly of the profits thence resulting. And even in general science, natural and abstract, the discovery of an important law leads at once to scientific distinction, to the receipt of scientific honours almost equivalent to an elevation in social rank, and to the possibility of obtaining certain national Prizes, placed by the Crown at the disposal of the Royal Society of London. But what rewards or encouragement await the discoverer of an important law whereby the development of a disease can be arrested, or its treatment greatly improved? By the recognised and proper usage of the Profession, he is prevented from practising in secret any curative process he may have brought to light, or from announcing to the public his private possession of some special knowledge of the nature of a particular malady. And if, adopting the legitimate course of procedure, he lay the results of his labours before the Medical body, and the latter through the usual organs, recognise the correctness and value of his views; to what extent is the individual discoverer benefitted socially, pecuniarily, or even Professionally? The most important Medical discovery will not necessarily bring to the successful investigator a single patient (and a pecuniary reward from any public source is at present quite out of the question), not will it obtain for him one additional vote in an election for any public appointment, nor will it materially facilitate his progress to any of the honorary posts at the disposal of the Profession itself. His merits will either remain utterly unknown to the general public, or will be confounded by the latter with those of some self-lauding impostor. Notwithstanding all this neglect, the Medical Practitioners of this Kingdom, acting against their common interests, as a body deriving pecuniary advantage from the prevalence of disease, and often at great personal sacrifices individually, have, during the last two hundred years, laboured incessantly for the advancement of Medical Science; and

to two of their number, Harvey and Jenner, mankind, in all countries and throughout all future generations, will remain indebted for tha greatest discoveries yet made in Physiology and Preventive Medicine.

Considering, then, that the value of General Science is fully recognised by every civilized government, and that the extent to which each particular science is admitted to the public patronage and support ought to be proportioned to the measure of the benefits which it is calculated to bestow on that nation, or on mankind at large, I must confess my inability to perceive why the cultivation of Medical Science should not in this country be deemed worthy of national encouragement, or why the body of men, who have so long furnished a series of ill-requited national and universal benefactions, should not, in England, occupy a social position equal to that of any other profession. On the Continent, by the spontaneous acts of the ruling powers, and in America, by the peculiar constitution of the United States, this injustice has long since been redressed; whereas, in that very country to which at this moment the eyes of all nations are directed, as the seat of the wisest and best form of government, an indefensible anomaly is permitted to exist, apparently for no other reason than that the Medical Profession, in its present character, did not form one of the institutions of Mediæval Feudalism. It is true that the improvement of the art of treating and preventing disease, as a practical application of the principles of our religion, does, in a certain sense, carry with it its own recompense, namely, in the consciousness of having done good to others. But granting that the successful followers of those pursuits do enjoy that high reward, a reward which, be it remembered, no earthly power can give or take away, it by no means follows that temporal governments are justified in ignoring the claims of the same men to a share in the distribution of national favours.

On these various grounds, therefore, the members of the Medical profession are I think, warranted in believing,

1.—That they ought to be placed in a position of social equality with the other Professions.

2.—That in the future distribution of national rewards, a larger share should be assigned to those men who may have laboured for the general good of mankind, and for the immediate happiness and relief of their suffering fellow-countrymen.

I have now, Sir, I fear very imperfectly and feebly, stated some of the grievances and claims of the Medical Profession. My remarks have hitherto been intended to apply to England only, but it is obvious that any legislative measures which are found to act beneficially in one portion of the United Kingdom must sooner or later be extended to the whole Empire.

It is, doubtless, no light duty for any Minister to devise a law which shall be satisfactory to even a majority of ten thousand active and intelligent men, rendered, perhaps, morbidly sensitive by long-continued neglect and injustice. The honour of achieving this task, will, however, be proportioned to its difficulty; and at no time could the general body of the Profession hail with greater satisfaction than they would at present, the final settlement of those vexatious questions, the discussion of which has so long impeded the promotion of the higher and more appropriate objects of Medical Association.

I have, lastly, Sir, to apologise, if in the course of the preceding remarks I may appear to have occasionally forgotten my own personal insignificance while contending for the rights of a Science which I love, and a Profession of which I am proud to be a Member.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

GEORGE ROBINSON, M.D.

Newcastle-on-Tyne, December 2, 1850.

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